Islamic Academy of Coventry

Sīrah of Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Part 21
The Battle of the Trench

Maulānā Ebrahim Noor



Sīrah of Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
Part 21 – The Battle of the Trench
1st Edition – 2021

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Islamic Academy of Coventry
83-87 Cambridge Street
Coventry CV1 5HU

www.Islamicacademycoventry.org
Islamicacademycoventry@hotmail.com

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Introduction

The Battle of Badr had taken place in the 2nd year after the migration to Madīnah, and the Battle of Uḥud in the 3rd year. The outcomes of the battles had been in favour of each side once.

Abū Sufyān had promised to meet the Muslims one year after the battle of Uḥud. The meeting was to take place at Badr in the 4th year. The year passed by, but Abū Sufyān did not want to face the Muslims. He sent Naʿīm ibn Masʿūd to Madīnah, to try and talk the Muslims out of coming to Badr. His words had the opposite effect on them. The news of the Quraysh assembling a large army only encouraged the Muslims even more.

The Muslims turned up at Badr and waited for their opponents. The Quraysh had set out from Makkah. , they turned back soon after. The excuse they used was that it was a year of famine and not a year to fight.

The threats against the Muslims were coming from all directions. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ heard that the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq were preparing an army to attack Madīnah. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ gathered the Muslim army and set off in their direction. The Banū al-Muṣṭaliq were not expecting the Muslim army to arrive, so were caught by surprise.

The expedition proved to be very bountiful. Many captives were taken as well as livestock.

Among those captured, was the daughter of the leader of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq. Her name was Juwayriyah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا. She had fallen into the lot of one of the Companions of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ who said she could gain her freedom by presenting a ransom.

Juwayriyah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا went to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to ask for assistance, to gain her freedom. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ made her a proposal that he would pay her ransom and free her as well, on the condition that she marries him. Juwayriyah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا accepted the proposal and became one of the mothers of the believers.

As a result of this union, all the people from the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq who had been captured, were freed by the Companions of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

During this expedition, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had been accompanied by ʿĀ'ishah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا. On the return journey, during one of the stops, ʿĀ'ishah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا had gone to answer the call of nature. She came back to the camp and realised she had lost her necklace. She went back to look for it, and while she was away from the camp, the army left.

ʿĀ'ishah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا came back and saw that the army had gone, so she waited for them. They would soon realize she was missing and then come back for her. While she was waiting, she fell asleep.

It so happened that one of the Companions, Ṣafwān ibn al-Muʿaṭṭal رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ, was behind the army and he saw her. He took her safely back to join the rest of the army. They never exchanged any words during this journey.

This incident caused false rumours to spread, and one of the main culprits spreading these rumours was the leader of the hypocrite's, ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay.

ʿĀ'ishah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا was initially unaware of these rumours. She had fallen ill and realised that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was not paying her the normal attention he would when she was unwell. When she found out about the rumours, she was extremely upset and asked Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ for permission to go to her mother's house. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ granted her permission and she went.

To prove her innocence, Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ chose to send Revelation. Ten verses of Sūrah al-Nūr were revealed to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ who then gave ʿĀ'ishah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا the glad tidings. These verses would be read until the end of days.

The Prelude to Battle

The Battle of Badr had taken place in the 2nd year after Hijrah, and the Battle of Uḥud in the 3rd year. In the 4th year, no confrontation took place between the Muslims and the Quraysh at Badr, as had been agreed at the end of the Battle of Uḥud. The Quraysh did not have the appetite for battle and returned to Makkah soon after they had set off.

It had now been 2 years since the Muslims and Quraysh had last met in the shadow of mount Uḥud. The Quraysh had won the day, but the Muslims had since increased in strength. The Quraysh would now once again try to defeat the Muslims once and for all. This time, they would be supported by many other tribes, hence it was called the 'Battle of the Confederates'. Another name for this confrontation was the 'Battle of the Trench'.

There is a difference of opinion as to when this battle took place. According to some scholars it happened in the 4th year after Hijrah, but the accepted opinion is that it occurred in the 5th year, in the month of Shawwāl.



The Confederates

The Banū al-Naḍīr were one of the three Jewish tribes who had lived in Madīnah. When Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ arrived in the blessed city, he had made a truce with all of them, to ensure they could all live together in peace and harmony.

On one occasion, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had gone to the locality of the Banū al-Naḍīr to ask for assistance in the payment of blood money, which was to be made to the Banū ʿĀmir. During this visit, the Banū al-Naḍīr conspired to kill Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and he was informed of their plan by Jibrīl عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ.

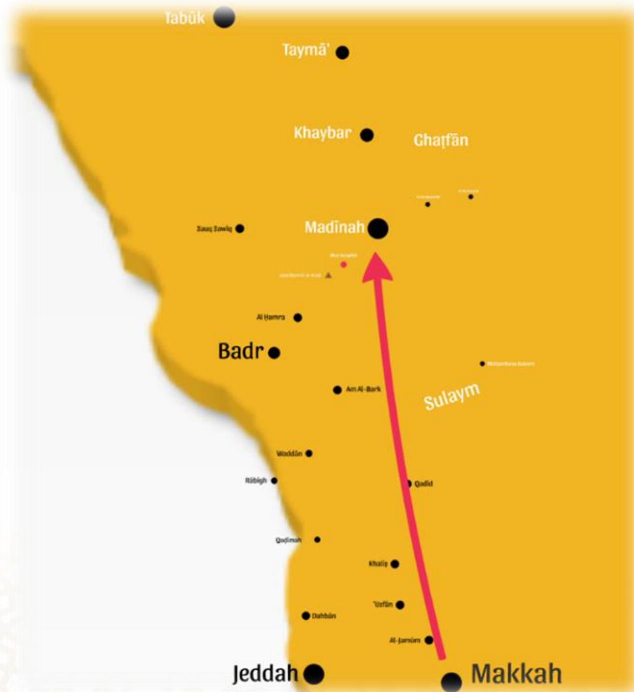
Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ laid siege to the Banū al-Naḍīr and they were eventually exiled from Madīnah due to breaking their truce with the Muslims.

Some of the leaders of the Banū al-Naḍīr now went to Makkah to encourage the Quraysh to fight the Muslims. Among them were Salām ibn Abū al-Ḥuqayq, Kinānah ibn Abū al-Ḥuqayq and Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab. They were accompanied by Hawdhah ibn Qays and Abū ʿAmmār from the Banū Wā'il. They told the Quraysh that they should attack Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and they would support them right until the end. The Quraysh agreed to this.



The party then left for the Banū Ghaṭfān, to try and get their support. One of the Jewish leaders, Kinānah, offered the Banū Ghaṭfān half of their total date produce from the orchards of Khaybar if they joined the attack. Upon hearing this their leader, ʿUyaynah ibn Hiṣn, agreed to join the confederates.

The Quraysh set out with Abū Sufyān as the commander in chief. The Banū Ghaṭfān were under the leadership of ʿUyaynah ibn Hiṣn from the Banū Fazārah, al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAwf from the Banū Murrah, and Misʿar ibn Rukhaylah from the Ashjaʿ.



The Quraysh travelled north in the direction of Madīnah once again. A force, ten thousand strong, had been put together to try and put an end to the Muslims once and for all.

The Trench

Rasūlullāh ﷺ received news of the impending attack and he called his Companions رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُمْ to decide what course of action to take. How should they confront this massive force of ten thousand?

Salmān al-Fārsī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ was a Companion who had come from Persia. He suggested that a trench be dug around the city. The Muslims would be able to stay safe behind the trench and confront the Confederates in that manner. The Muslims were outnumbered more than 3 to 1, so it would not be advisable to confront the enemy in an open battlefield.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ acted upon the advice of Salmān al-Fārsī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ and it was decided that a trench should be dug. Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself decided the location of the trench and drew a line.



The digging of the trench was shared out, so 10 people were assigned to dig 10 gaz. A gaz was a measure at that time, approximately 25 to 37 inches, so about a yard. So, 10 yards of the trench had to be dug between 10 people.

The trenches were dug very deep. The preferred opinion is that it took a total of 6 days to dig the trench; other reports say it took 20 days.

The Natural Fortifications

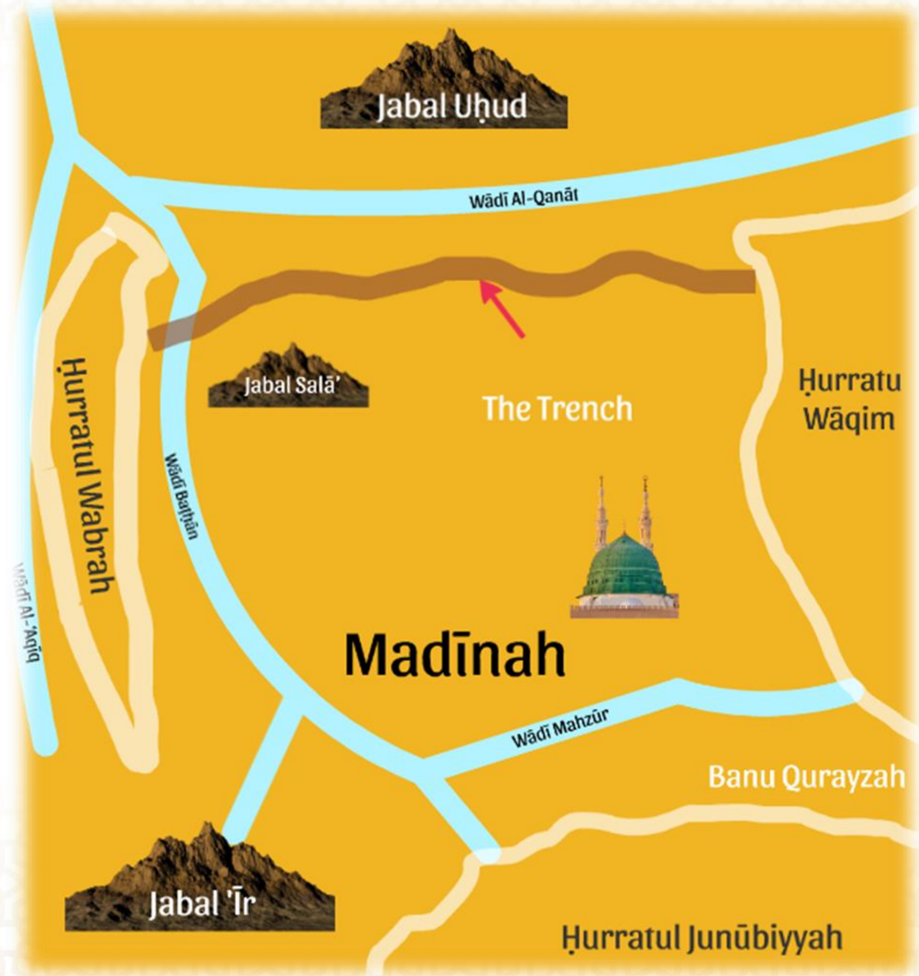
Madīnah was surrounded on three sides by woods and mountains, so no large group or army would be able to attack them from these directions. To the east was Ḥurratul Wāqim, to the south was Ḥurratul Junūbiyyah and to the west was Ḥurratul Wabrah.

Jabal Īr was also to the south and Jabal Salaʿ to the north west. All of these were natural fortifications. The only option available to an enemy, would be to come from the north.



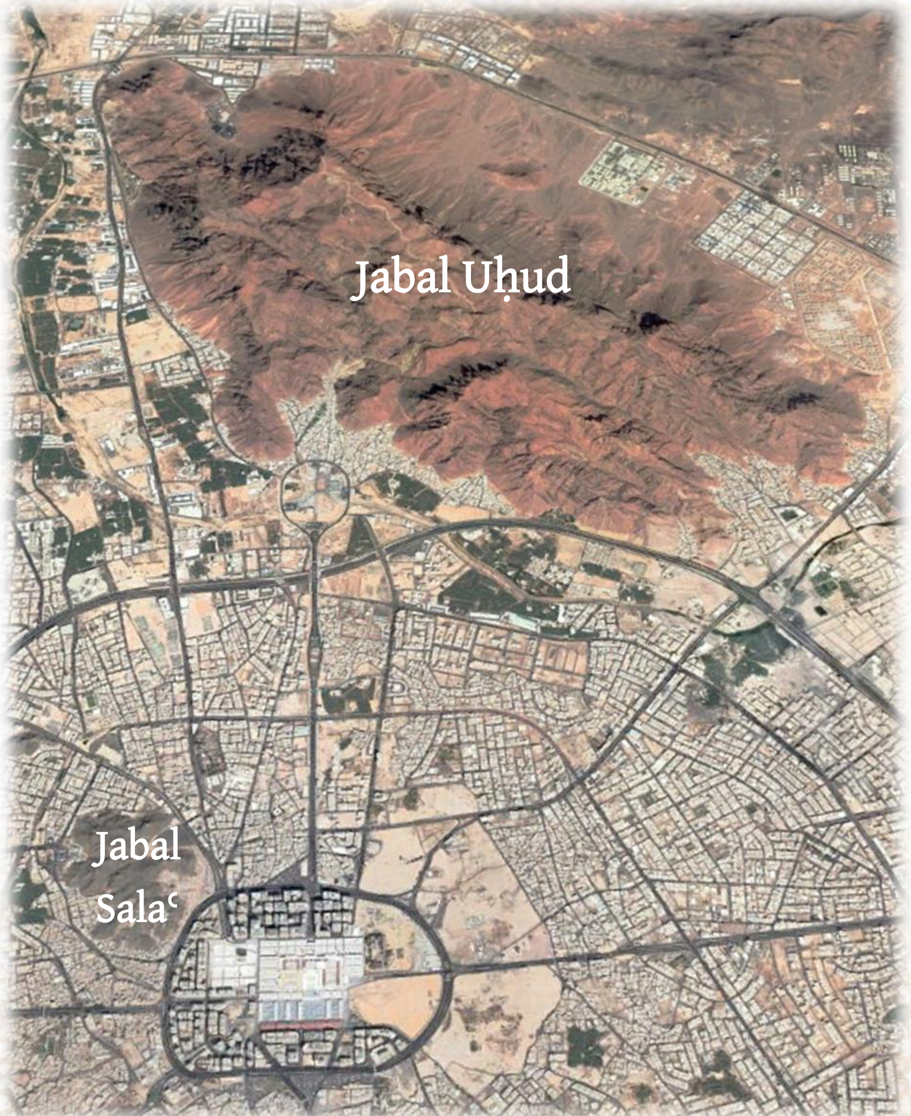
The Location of the Trench

Rasūlullāh ﷺ commanded that the trench be dug to the north. You can see from the brown line, the approximate location of the Trench.



Present Day Location of the Trench

If we look at a present-day map of Madīnah, you can see Jabal Uḥud to the north and Jabal Salaʿ to the north west of Masjid Nabawī.



The Seven Masājid

Seven Masājid had been built on the western side of Jabal Salaʿ, showing the location of part of the trench.



These are called:

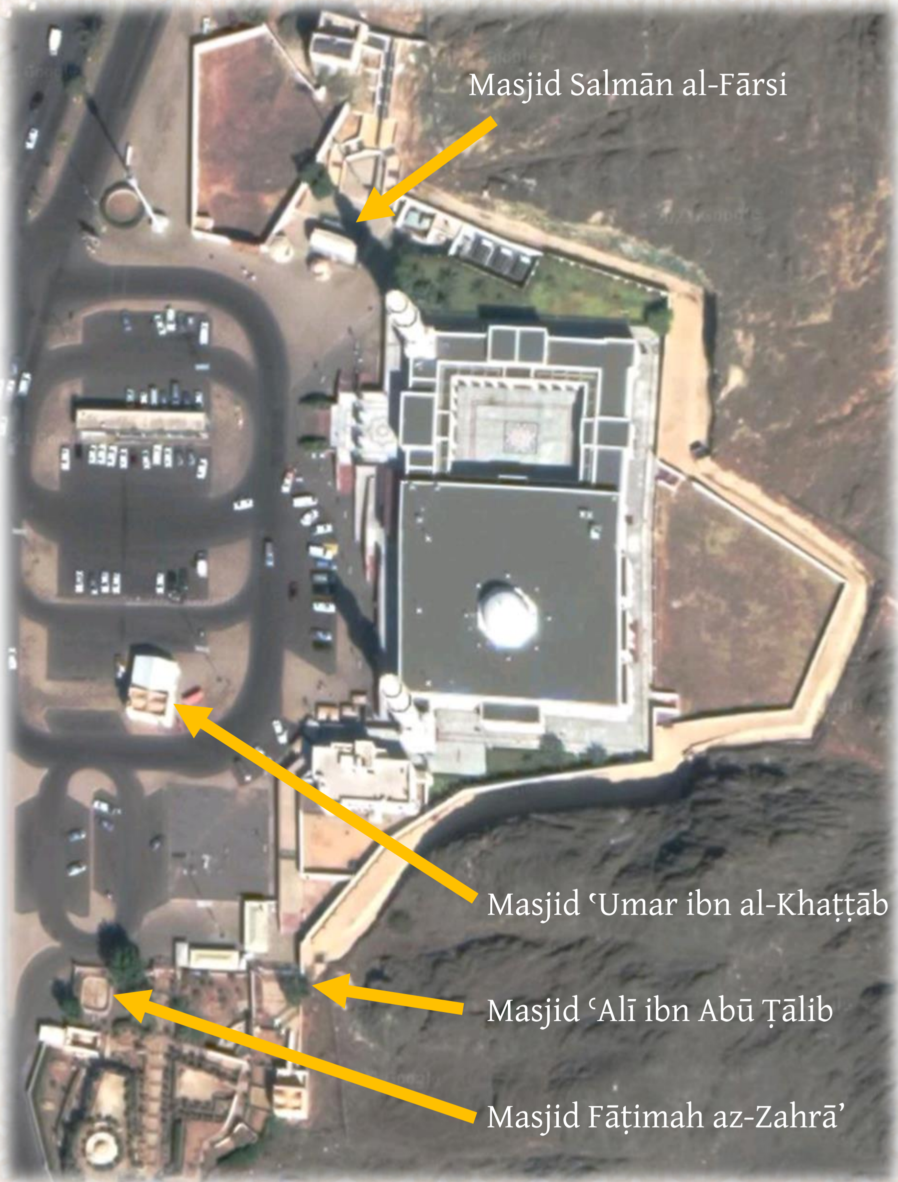
- Masjid al-Fatḥ
- Masjid Salmān al-Fārsi رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ
- Masjid Abu Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ
- Masjid ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ
- Masjid Saʿad ibn Muʿādh رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ
- Masjid ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ
- Masjid Fāṭimah az-Zahrā' رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا

Jāmiᶜ al-Khandaq & The Seven Masājid

If you go there today, a new Masjid has now been built in the place of some of the Masājid called Jāmīᶜ al-Khandaq, which you can see in the picture below. The Masjid and the surrounding area is also known as ‘al-Masājid al-Sabᶜah’ or ‘The Seven Masjids’.



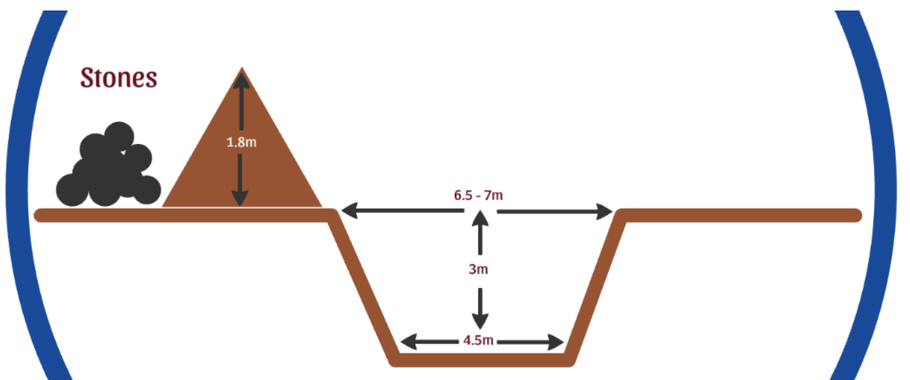
The location of the remaining Masājid can be seen below:



The Size of the Trench

The purpose of the trench was to ensure the enemy was not able to breach it, and attack the Muslims on the other side. It had to be large enough, to be fit for purpose.

The trench was dug 3 metres deep, with the base being 4.5 metres wide. The width at the top of the trench was between 6.5 and 7 metres. The dirt, which was dug up from the trench, was then piled up on the side of the Muslim army, at a height of 1.8m. If the enemy tried to breach the trench, not only would they have to drop down 3 metres into the trench, but they would also have to climb another 3 metres to get back to ground level and would then be faced with another wall of nearly 2 metres, which is around 15 feet in total! Stones were also piled up behind the dirt wall, to use as a weapon against the enemy.



The Digging of the Trench

Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself helped in digging the trenches and was the first to start the digging. He was reciting the following words:

بسم الله وبه بدينا

'We start in the name of Allāh'

ولو عبدنا غيره شقينا

'And if we worship other than him, then we are very unfortunate'

حبذا ربا وحبذا دينا

'How good is our Lord and how good is our Religion'

Even though there were strong winds and the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ had gone many days without food, they carried on working and digging fervently.



The Miracles

Ibn Hishām mentions a couple of incidents where Allāh سُبۡحَانَهُۥوَتَعَالَىٰ provided the Companions رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُمۡ with provisions.

On one occasion, the daughter of Bashīr ibn Saʿad رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ was sent by her mother to give some dates to her father and her uncle, ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ. As she went looking for them, Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ asked her what she had. She told him that she had some dates, so Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ asked her to give them to him.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ then asked for a sheet, which was brought and spread before him. He then threw the dates on the sheet and called the Companions رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُمۡ to come and eat. They ate till they could eat no more and the dates still remained.



On another occasion, Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ decided to invite Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ for some food. He had a small sheep which he roasted and told his wife to grind some barley and prepare some bread.

Jābir رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ then when to Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ and invited him to his home. Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ then said:

" يَا أَهْلَ الْخَنْدَقِ إِنَّ جَابِرًا قَدْ صَنَعَ سُؤْرًا فَحَيَّ هَلاً بِكُمْ "[1]

'O people of the trench, indeed Jābir has prepared 'Su'r' so come along'

Jābir رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ got worried as he had only roasted a small sheep, how could this much food feed all of them?

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ sat down and supplicated to Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to bless the food. He then ate with his Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who were with him at the time. Once they had finished, another group came and ate. Once they had finished, another group came and ate. This continued until all the Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ had eaten.

[1] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri 3070

The Boulder

Jābir رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ mentions, that while they were digging, they came across a large boulder. They told Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ about this, so he told them to wait, and he would come down into the trench himself.

At that time, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had tied a stone to his stomach due to hunger and Jābir رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ mentions that they had not tasted anything for three days, meaning they had not had any food for three days. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ took hold of a pickaxe and struck the boulder. The boulder then turned into sand.

In the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad and Sunan an-Nasa'ī, it mentions that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said 'Bismillāh' and struck the boulder and one third of it broke.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ then said 'Allāhu Akbar, I have been given the keys to Shām (Syria). By Allāh I can see the red palaces with my eyes at this moment in time.'



When he struck it the second time, then the second third of the boulder broke and he said, 'Allāhu Akbar, I have been given the

keys of Persia. By Allāh I can see the white palaces of Madyan (Midian) with my eyes at this moment in time.’

Saying Bismillāh, he struck it a third time and the rest of the boulder also broke. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said ‘Allāhu Akbar, I have been given the keys of Yemen. By Allāh I can see the doors of Ṣanʿā’ with my eyes at this moment in time.’

Another narration mentions, that the first time Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ struck the boulder, there was a flash of lighting through which the palaces of Shām (Syria) became illuminated.

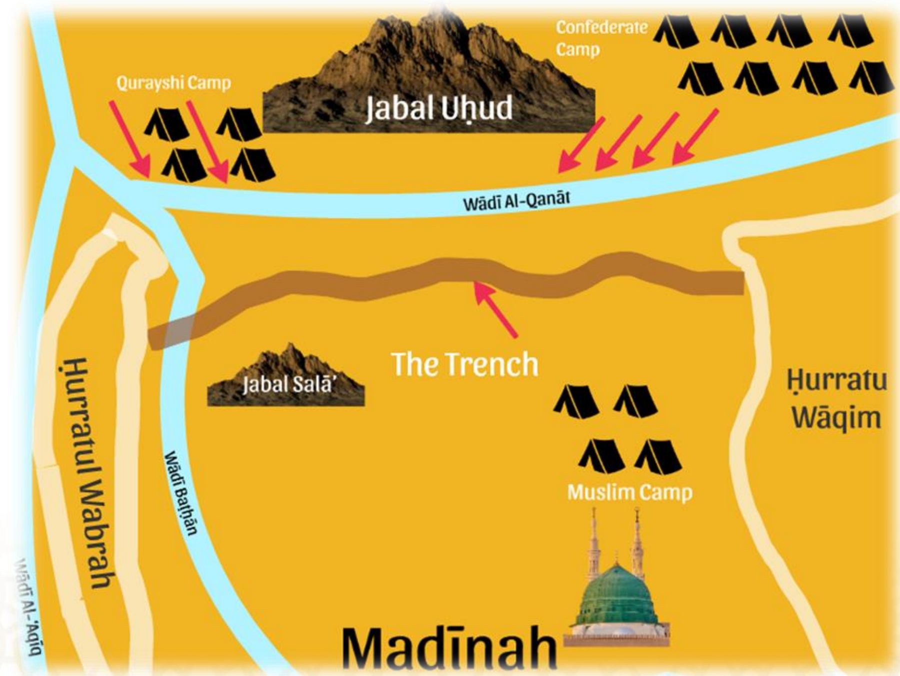
Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said the Takbīr and so did the Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ then said that Jibrīl عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ has informed him that his ummah will conquer these places.



The Confederates Arrive

The Muslims finished digging the trench and the 10,000 strong army of the Confederates arrived in Madīnah. They camped near the foot of mountain Uḥud, in the north.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ went with 3,000 Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ and stopped at Salaᶜ. The trench was in between both armies. The Muslim women and children were told to protect themselves inside one of the forts in Madīnah.



Quraysh were camped to the north west and the tribes of Ghaṭfān, Murrah, Asad, Ashjaᶜ, Fazārah and Sulaym were to the north east as can be seen above.

The Banū Qurayẓah

The Banū Qurayẓah were the remaining Jewish tribe which still lived in Madīnah. Up until this point, the Banū Qurayẓah had remained separate from the Confederates. There was already a treaty in place between the Banū Qurayẓah and Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

The Banū al-Naḍīr had been expelled from Madīnah for breaking their treaty with the Muslims, and their leaders had already been instrumental in gathering the forces to confront the Muslims. Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab, had tried his utmost best to get the Banū Qurayẓah to join the Confederates, to the extent that he personally went to Kaʿab ibn Asad, the leader of the Banū Qurayẓah.

When Kaʿab ibn Asad saw Ḥuyayy coming, he closed the doors to his fort. Ḥuyayy called him to open the door. Kaʿab replied, that he had made an oath with Muḥammad ﷺ and he would never break it. Ḥuyayy kept on insisting until he managed to convince Kaʿab to break his oath.

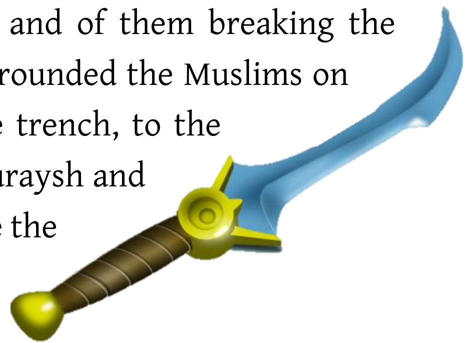


The Broken Oath

When Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ found out about the Banū Qurayẓah breaking the oath, he sent Saʿad ibn Muʿādh, Saʿad ibn ʿUbādah, ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah and Khawwāt ibn Jubayr رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ to confirm the news. All these Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ were from the Anṣār.

They went to Kaʿab ibn Asad and reminded him of the treaty. Kaʿab ibn Asad said, 'What treaty are you talking about, and who is Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ? I have no treaty with him.' They came back and informed Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ of this treachery.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ got upset when he heard about the betrayal of the Banū Qurayẓah and of them breaking the treaty. The enemy had now surrounded the Muslims on all sides. On the outside of the trench, to the north, were the armies of the Quraysh and their allies. Within the city were the Banū Qurayẓah.



The nights were harsh, and in the daytime, the Muslims were starving. These were testing times when hypocrisy and sincerity were being differentiated. The hypocrites also started to make excuses. They said that the walls of their houses were not secure, and they had to protect their women and children so wanted permission to do so.

Allāh سُبۡحَانَهُۥوَتَعَالَىٰ mentioned this situation in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:

إِذْ جَآءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ ٱلْأَبْصَـٰرُ
وَبَلَغَتِ ٱلْقُلُوبُ ٱلْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِٱللَّهِ ٱلظُّنُونَا۠ ﴿١٠﴾
هُنَالِكَ ٱبْتُلِىَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا۟ زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾[2]

"(Recall) when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes were distracted, and the hearts reached the throats, and you were thinking about Allāh all sorts of thoughts. (10)
At that occasion, the believers were put to a trial and were shaken with a violent convulsion. (11)"

The Banū Ghaṭfān

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had seen that the Banū Qurayẓah and the hypocrites had broken their oaths. This siege had caused a lot of difficulty and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ wanted to find a way to reduce the enemies' strength.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ proposed a treaty with ʿUyaynah ibn Hiṣn and Ḥārith ibn ʿAwf, who were the leaders of the Banū Ghaṭfān. This would involve giving them one third of the date produce

[2] Sūrah al-Aḥzāb verses 10-11

from the orchards of Madīnah and in turn they would not support Abū Sufyān, and there would be some relief from the siege.



Rasūlullāh ﷺ told Saʿad ibn Muʿādh & Saʿad ibn ʿUbādah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا about his plan. They asked Rasūlullāh ﷺ whether Allāh سُبْحَانَهُۥ وَتَعَالَىٰ had commanded this? If he has then they would carry out his command. Or was Rasūlullāh ﷺ doing this because he was concerned about them?

Rasūlullāh ﷺ replied, that Allāh سُبْحَانَهُۥ وَتَعَالَىٰ had not commanded this. Rather, he had proposed this, because the Confederates had come together to attack them. By doing this, Rasūlullāh ﷺ wanted to break the strength they had due to this unity.

Saʿad ibn Muʿādh رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ said words to the effect that Islām had given them honour and it was impossible for them to give them (the Banū Ghaṭfān) their wealth. There was no need to give them their wealth; they would only give them their swords. They could do what they wish.

Saʿad ibn Muʿādh رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ then took the proposed agreement and removed all the words which had been written.

The Skirmishes

The armies were positioned on either side of the trench. This type of warfare had never been seen before in the Arab world, so the Quraysh were struggling to breach the trench to attack the Muslims.

Two weeks passed like this with no open confrontation. Each side would shoot arrows at each other, but the Quraysh could not find a way across.

The Challenge

The Quraysh kept on trying to find ways to cross the trench. Finally, some of the cavalry of the Quraysh, including, ʿIkrimah ibn Abū Jahl set out to confront the Muslims. When they reached the trench, they said, by Allāh, this type of treachery was not in the Arabs before.

There was one place where the trench was not as wide, so they managed to get across and challenged the Muslims to fight.



ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd was one of the Qurayshi warriors. He had sustained injuries during the Battle of Badr and was covered in armour from head to toe. He called out, 'Is there anyone to challenge me?'

ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ came forward to accept his challenge. He said, 'Oh ʿAmr, I am calling you towards Allāh and his Messenger صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ and invite you towards Islām.' ʿAmr said, 'I have no need for this.' ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ then said, 'I am inviting you to then fight.' ʿAmr then said to ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ that he was too young, and to send someone who is older to fight him as he did not want to kill him.

ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ replied that he would prefer to kill him. Upon hearing this ʿAmr got off his horse and came forward and attacked ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ. ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ defended himself with his shield against the blow but sustained a wound to his forehead. ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ then attacked ʿAmr and put an end to him.

ʿAlī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ cried the Takbīr so the Companions رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُمْ realized he had triumphed.



Nawfal ibn ʿAbdullāh

Nawfal ibn ʿAbdullāh also came forward with the intention of putting an end to Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ. He came charging on his horse and tried to jump over the trench. Rather than breach it, he fell in the trench and broke his neck. This injury proved fatal.

The polytheists offered Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ 10,000 dirhams to hand back his corpse to them. Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ said that his corpse was unclean and so was his ransom. They had no need for this ransom and no need for his corpse. Without any return, the Muslims handed back the corpse of Nawful ibn ʿAbdullāh.



Nuʿaym ibn Masʿūd Ashjaʿī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ

Nuʿaym ibn Masʿūd Ashjaʿī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ, one of the nobles of the Banū Ghaṭfān, came to see Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ. He told Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ that he had embraced Islām, but his people were unaware of this.

Nuʿaym ibn Masʿūd Ashjaʿī رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنۡهُ had come up with a plan to try and break the siege and asked permission from Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ if he could implement it. Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ granted his request.

The Plan

Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ first went to the Banū Qurayẓah, the Jewish tribe, who had broken their treaty with the Muslims, and still lived in Madīnah. They were unaware of the reversion of Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ to Islām, so trusted his counsel.

Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ told the Banū Qurayẓah, that if the Quraysh and Banū Ghaṭfān fail to defeat the Muslims, they would return to Makkah. This would then leave the Banū Qurayẓah exposed to Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and the Muslims. Therefore, if they are asked by the Quraysh to attack the Muslims, they should refuse unless they are given some hostages from the leading men of their tribes. These hostages would then serve as a guarantee that the Quraysh and Banū Ghaṭfān would not leave until they had defeated the Muslims. Once the Muslims had been defeated, the hostages could be returned.

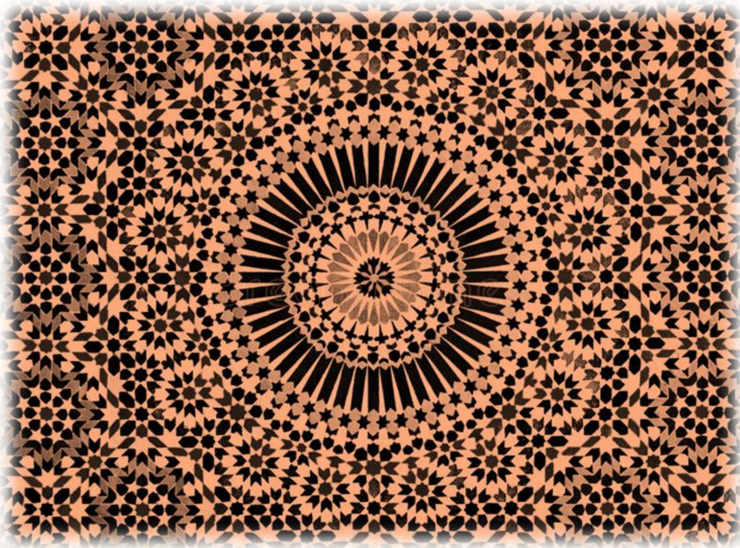
The Banū Qurayẓah accepted the advice of Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ and promised not to tell anyone that it was him who had advised them.

Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ then went to the Quraysh and spoke to Abū Sufyān. Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ told Abū Sufyān that he had some very important information. He would tell him what this information was on the condition that he would not tell anyone that it was him who had told him. Abū Sufyān agreed to this.

Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ told him that the Banū Qurayẓah told him that they now regretted breaking the treaty with Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Furthermore, they have told Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ that they will take some of the leading men of the Quraysh and Banū Ghaṭfān and give them to him. They will also fight alongside him with those left behind from the enemy. Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ has agreed to this.

If the Banū Qurayẓah ask you for any men, do not give them at any cost. Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ then went to the other clans of the Banū Ghaṭfān and told them what he had told Abū Sufyān about the Banū Qurayẓah.



The Test of loyalty



The leaders of the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān wanted to see if the information from Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ was true. They sent ʿIkrimah, the son of Abū Jahl, with a message to the Banū Qurayẓah. The message was to inform them to get ready to fight on the following day.

Upon receiving the instructions, the Banū Qurayẓah replied that the following day was their Sabbath. They would also not fight with Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ unless they were given some men from the Quraysh and Banū Ghaṭfān as hostages who they could hold as security until the Muslims were defeated. The Banū Qurayẓah said that they feared, if the battle goes against them and the Quraysh and Banū Ghaṭfān go back home, they would be left to face Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ alone.

When the reply reached the leaders of the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān, they said that Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ had told them the truth. They sent a message back to the Banū Qurayẓah to say they would not send them a single man and in turn the Banū Qurayẓah said that they would not fight with them against the Muslims.

The plan had worked, and a wedge was now driven between the two parties. The seeds of mistrust had been sown between the

Quraysh and Banū Ghaṭfān on one side and the Banū Qurayẓah on the other.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدٌ أَخْبَرَنَا الْفَزَارِيُّ وَعَبْدَةُ عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ أَبِي خَالِدٍ قَالَ
سَمِعْتُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ أَبِي أَوْفَى رضى الله عنهما يَقُولُ دَعَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى
الله عليه وسلم عَلَى الأَحْزَابِ فَقَالَ
" اللَّهُمَّ مُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابِ سَرِيعَ الْحِسَابِ اهْزِمِ الأَحْزَابَ
اللَّهُمَّ اهْزِمْهُمْ وَزَلْزِلْهُمْ "[3]

ʿAbdullāh ibn Abū Auf رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ said that Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ supplicated to Allāh against the Confederates and said, ‘Oh Allāh, Revealer of the Book, swift caller to account, defeat the Confederates, Oh Allāh, defeat them and shake them.’



[3] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6392

The Revelation

Allāh سُبۡحَانَهُۥوَتَعَالَىٰ answered the supplication of Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيۡهِوَسَلَّمَ and sent a severe wind upon the camps of the Confederates. This wind caused their tents to rip up from the ground. The dust blew into the eyes of the enemy so they could not see. They were in total disarray and utter confusion.

Allāh سُبۡحَانَهُۥوَتَعَالَىٰrevealed this verse in relation to this event:

يٰۤـاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اِذۡ جَآءَتۡكُمۡ جُنُوۡدٌ فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ رِيۡحًا وَّجُنُوۡدًا لَّمۡ تَرَوۡهَا‌ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِيۡرًا ۚ[4]

"O you who believe, remember Allāh's favour to you, when the forces (of the infidels) came upon you, and We sent upon them a wind, and the forces (of Angels) you did not see. Allāh is watchful of whatever you do."

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[4] Sūrah al-Aḥzāb verse 9

The Bravery of Ḥudhayfah رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ

Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ gave him the order to go and see what the Quraysh were doing. He said that he might get caught. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ replied that he would not get captured and then made the following supplication for Ḥudhayfah رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ:

اللهم احفظه من بين يديه ومن خلفه وعن يمينه وعن شماله
و من فوقه و من تحته

'Oh Allāh, protect him from the front, and from behind and from the right and from the left and from above him and from below him.'

The Camp

When Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ made this supplication, all fear left Ḥudhayfah رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ. When he started to leave for the Qurayshi camp, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ told him not to do anything which was unneeded.

Upon reaching the enemy camp, Ḥudhayfah رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ saw that the wind was so severe, nothing was staying in its place. It was also so dark, that nothing could be seen. He then heard Abū Sufyān telling the Quraysh that this was not a place to stay, and that their animals had died. The Banū Qurayẓah had left their side and this

wind has made them suffer. It was difficult to get around and it would be best if they returned at once. Upon saying this Abū Sufyān got on his camel.

Ḥudhayfah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ says that at that time the thought occurred to him that he should shoot Abū Sufyān with an arrow, but then he remembered that Rasūlullāh صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ had warned him against doing anything unwarranted.

Ḥudhayfah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ then returned to the Muslim camp. The Confederates abandoned their camp, and the siege was finally broken.



حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ آدَمَ
حَدَّثَنَا إِسْرَائِيلُ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا إِسْحَاقَ
يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنَ صُرَدٍ يَقُولُ
سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ حِينَ أَجْلَى الأَحْزَابَ عَنْهُ
" الآنَ نَغْزُوهُمْ وَلاَ يَغْزُونَنَا نَحْنُ نَسِيرُ إِلَيْهِمْ "[5]

Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that he heard Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ say, 'From now on we will go to attack them, and they will not come to attack us, we will go to them.'

The meaning behind this was that disbelievers had become so weak, they could no longer take any steps to attack the Muslims, with the Muslims having to defend themselves. Now the opposite had happened. Islām had now gained enough strength, to take the fight to them.

[5] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4110

The Siege Ends

When the morning arrived, Rasūlullāh ﷺ returned to Madīnah with these words on his lips.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شىءٍ قديرٌ آيِبونَ تَائِبُونَ عَابِدُونَ سَاجِدُونَ لِرَبِّنَا حَامِدُونَ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَنَصَرَ عَبْدَهُ وَهَزَمَ الْأَحْزَابَ وَحْدَهُ

'None has the right to be worshipped except Allāh alone, Who has no partners. To Him belongs the Kingdom, all praises are for Him, and He is able to do all things (i.e., Omnipotent). We are returning with repentance (to Allāh) worshipping, prostrating, and praising our Lord. Allāh has fulfilled His Promise, made His slave victorious, and He (Alone) defeated the clans (of infidels)."

According to some opinions, the siege of Madīnah had lasted for fifteen days, this is the most preferred opinion. Another opinion was that it lasted twenty-four days.

Three people had died from the polytheists, including Naufal ibn ʿAbdullāh & ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd

The Martyrs of Battle

From the Muslims, six Companions رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُمْ had become martyred as follows:

- Saʿad ibn Muʿādh رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ
- Anas ibn Uwais رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ
- ʿAbdullāh ibn Sahl رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ
- Ṭufayl ibn Nuʿmān رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ
- Thaʿlabah ibn Ghanam رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ
- Kaʿab ibn Zayd رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ

Two others have also been mentioned as follows:

- Qays ibn Zayd رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ
- ʿAbdullāh ibn Abū Khālid رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ



The Cemetery of the Martyrs, of the Battle of the Trench

Summary of Gazwah al-Aḥzāb

Battle Number	17
Name of the Battle	al-Aḥzāb
Date of the Battle	5AH Shawwāl
Reason for Expedition	A confederation of Arab tribes came together to attack Madīnah, upon the advice of Ḥuyayy and his companions
Location	al-Madīnah
Representative of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in charge of affairs in Madīnah	Ibn Umm Maktūm رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ
Standard Bearer for the Muslim Army	Zayd ibn Ḥārithah & Saʿad ibn ʿUbādah رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُمَا
Leader of the enemy forces	Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb
Number of Muslims	3,000
Number of enemy forces or information about them	10,000
Number of nights Rasūlullāh spent outside of Madīnah for Expedition	6 days were spent digging the trench, which was followed by a siege lasting 15 days
Type of Battle	Defence
Verses of Qur'ān narrated in relation to Expedition	Verses from Sūrah al-Aḥzāb
Outcome of Battle	The Confederates abandoned the siege

Summary

The Banū al-Naḍīr conspired to create a coalition of Arab tribes to attack the Muslims. They had been exiled from Madīnah due to breaking their treaty with Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and were seeking retribution.

Some of their leaders including Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab went to the Quraysh asking for assistance in their endeavour. The Quraysh were still smarting from their original defeat in Badr and their inability to totally defeat the Muslims in Uḥud, so they agreed to go to Madīnah. The Banū Ghaṭfān were then approached and offered half the date produce from Khaybar. They also agreed as did some other tribes, so now a coalition was formed known as 'The Confederates'.

Abū Sufyān marched to Madīnah and an army totalling 10,000 soldiers, including people from all the allied tribes, assembled outside the city near the mountain of Uḥud.

The Muslims found out about the impending attack and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ called his Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ to discuss the situation. How should they confront the Confederates?

Upon the advice of Salmān al-Fārsī رَضِيَ ٱللَّٰهُ عَنْهُ, a deep trench was dug to the north and west of Madīnah. The dirt which had been taken out from the trench was then piled up on the side towards

Madīnah. Not only would the enemy have to breach the trench, but they would also have to get over this additional obstacle as well, to get to the Muslims. All the other sides of the city had natural protection through woods and mountains.

When the Confederates arrived, they were surprised at seeing the trench, as this was unseen before in the Arab lands. This now proved a major obstacle for them, as they could not directly attack the Muslims.

The remaining Jewish tribe in Madīnah, the Banū Qurayẓah also broke their truce with the Muslims. The Muslims were now surrounded by enemies, both inside and outside of the trench. The Confederates to the north and the Banū Qurayẓah to the south.

A few skirmishes occurred when the Qurayshi cavalry breached the trench at one of the narrow points, but no open confrontation took place. Two of the Quraysh lost their lives during this encounter.

Nuʿaym ibn Masʿūd Ashjaʿī رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ was one of the nobles of the Banū Ghaṭfān. He had embraced Islām, but the Confederates were unaware of this. He came to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and asked permission to try to break the siege by sowing the seeds of mistrust between the tribes. Permission was granted.

Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ went to the Banū Qurayẓah and told them that they would be left exposed to the Muslims if the Quraysh went back to Makkah without defeating Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and advised them to ask for some hostages from the Quraysh. The hostages would serve as a guarantee and ensure the Quraysh would not leave without completing their task at hand.

Nuʿaym رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ then went to the Quraysh and told them that the Banū Qurayẓah had plotted with Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and planned to hand over some of their men to him. When the Quraysh went to see the Banū Qurayẓah, their suspicions were proved correct, and each side had thought they had been betrayed by the other.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ then supplicated to Allāh and a fierce wind came and ripped up the camp of the Confederates. The Confederates eventually left and the siege which had lasted for 15 days was finally broken. 6 or 8 Companions رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ had been martyred in the battle, but the Muslims had claimed a massive psychological victory as they had defended Madīnah from 10,000 soldiers.

This now marked the beginning of the rise of Islām and the diminishing power of the polytheists. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ now had the challenge of dealing with the Banū Qurayẓah for their betrayal.

Sīrah of Muḥammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
Part 21 – The Battle of the Trench

www.Islamicacademycoventry.org
Islamicacademycoventry@hotmail.com
83-87 Cambridge Street
Coventry CV1 5HU